

I Appeal To Your Sense Of Shame

My Muslim Sister…

Will You Not Respond?

Nawaal Bint Abdullah

Translated by Abdul-Qaadir Abdul-Khaaliq

Table Of Contents

Translator’s Foreword

As-Salaamu 'Alaikum

Verily the praise and thanks is due to Allah. We offer to Him all praise and gratitude, and we seek His assistance and forgiveness. We seek refuge in Allah from the evil of our souls and the wickedness of our deeds. Whoever Allah guides there is none who can lead him astray and whosoever Allah misguides there are none who can bring him to the path. I bear witness that there is nothing truly worthy of worship except Allah and that Muhammad is His slave servant and Messenger. May Allah send his salaat and salaam upon His Prophet Muhammad, his family, companions, and all those who follow them in righteousness until the Day of Resurrection. Ameen

We thought it prudent to preface the translation of this brief work by our sister Nawaal Bint Abdullah (may Allah preserve her) with a few words about the background and context of the booklet. This is because the author is describing a common phenomenon in Muslim countries, especially in the Arabian Gulf region. It is an appeal that is full of emotion and concern and even a bit of outrage that may not be readily understood by not only non-Muslims but Muslims living in other parts of the world. Her outrage may seem strange to many in places where what she is complaining of and describes commonly occurs and largely goes unnoticed. Such behavior however, has far more of an impact where the Islamic environment or local culture is relatively more conservative than in most places.

The author's evident dismay and distress at what would seem a relatively mild lack of adherence may indeed appear extreme to those outside her context. Indeed we realize that perhaps most Muslim women would find absolutely nothing wrong with what she describes and may even view some women whom she even points to who wear niqaab in their midst as quite conservative considering that most other women in their locale may not consider a face veil at all necessary as opposed to the majority view in Saudi Arabia from where the author wrote. Many commonly wear merely a scarf and slacks, dresses that do not reach the ankles, no abaayah (A lightweight overgarment worn by Muslim women that covers the dress underneath. It is commonly black in Gulf countries) or jibaab (see the Appendix: Requirements of Women's Hijaab) some make-up, perfume, or maybe nothing close to Islamic hijaab and often interact with members of the opposite sex.

What should be considered is if the author is comparing the state of affairs to the actual requirements of Islamic Hijaab, and not merely local culture, and if those requirements are being adhered to or not by the majority. If they are not, what does that tell us about the state of the ummah and its women as a whole?

We must also mention that in a relatively conservative Islamic environment, men often become far more sensitive to the attractions of women and the sight of merely a woman's hands or even feet, much less a pretty face, can be enough to cause a great trial upon them! The great Imaam, Muhammad Idrees Shaafi once remarked that he was in the marketplace when he happened to see a woman's ankle and thought he would lose half of his knowledge! Imagine the impact on such people of the satellite dish, videos, magazines and other media where the beauty of women is highlighted and exploited!

Sister Nawaal fervently points to the dangers and the negative influence of western culture and moral values upon the habits and thought processes of many Muslim women. She asserts that such influence is neither passive nor haphazard and that it is a serious and substantial threat not just to Islamic values but to livelihood and values once held precious by mankind as a whole. Can it not be so when the evidence of reality is before our eyes! Could a clear-thinking believer see otherwise? Ours is a world where pornography is a multi-billion dollar industry. Sexual practices of all types are commonly and openly broadcast on television. Men and women speak openly on talk shows and other venues of the most graphic and lurid details of their sexual exploits, and women suffer more physical and sexual abuse than any other group. Even the president of the most revered nation on the earth has his most illicit sexual encounters graphically described for the world to read.

Those living in Islamic environments are in stark contrast to those (including Muslims) living in places where women are almost always uncovered and beautified and often practically naked in public places. The latter are usually far less sensitive and even rarely shocked at anything. Western civilization is built upon the appreciation of the naked form in art and in life. (Even ancient eastern cultures heavily emphasized sexuality such as the Indian Karma Sutra)

It is well known that in the west, today's "modern and progressive" women are encouraged to be as unashamed of their bodies as possible and to never allow themselves to be restricted. Every day life is full of images and interaction between the sexes involving every type of woman. Sexual openness is considered healthy while anything limiting that is considered repressive and backward. How must such a woman like the author feel in light of this reality? Additionally, she is seeing these things in the Heartland of Islam where there is relatively easy access to many scholars whom one can listen to and speak with (women included) in person or by phone, through audio tapes, or even the radio and television. Not to mention the treasure trove of good Islamic books, the presence of institutions of learning and memorizing the Qur'aan and hadeeth for women. On top of all that she sees it among women whose native tongue is Arabic and whose heritage is Islam and should therefore have little excuse to be uninformed.

There is a hadeeth that goes: This world is like a prison to the believer but it is the paradise of the disbeliever. [Muslim, At-Tirmidhi, Ibn Maajah, Ahmed & others] Our sister Nawaal, and many other men and women like her, face a seemingly unwinnable battle to stem the tide of western influence in Islamic areas. They are painted as fanatics and regressive while those who advocate relaxation of Islamic shari'ah are deemed reasonable and progressive, especially with regards to women, and their usual first target is observance of Islamic hijaab.

We ask Allah to reward the author and we are grateful to her for granting permission to translate and publish her work in English. We have attempted to do justice to her Arabic style though we have always found this almost unrealistic due to the vast difference between Arabic and English prose. In this regard my greatest thanks goes to Mr. Ahmed Ezzat whose revision of the translation was invaluable. We hope to have successfully overcome most of the difficulties of translating such a work like this and pray that we are successful in conveying the meaning of this heartfelt message from a member our most precious and respected Islamic sisterhood to her sisters in faith.

Abdul-Qaadir Abdul-Khaaliq
Riyadh

What Is Hayaa?

Hayaa' (modesty and a sense of shame) is a fundamental characteristic of the noble and a sign of high standards and eemaan. Among the best of what has been said of it is that, "It is a fine sensitivity and delicate feeling that is evident in the eye and that affects the features. Whoever has been forbidden from it has been forbidden from all good and whoever has been crowned with it has obtained honor and nobility and been bestowed with complete good.' [Mawaarid Ath-Thamaan Li-Duroos Az-Zamaan - Abdul-Azeez As-Salamaan, Vol. 3 pg. 367] How could it be otherwise when the best of the creation of Allah, sallallahu 'alaihi wa sallam, stated: Al-Hayaa' khairun kulluh (Hayaa' is all good) [Muslim]?

This hayaa' has become feeble and withdrawn. Moreover, destructive concepts and designs aimed at us from the enemies of Allah and (enemies of) the Muslim woman, eat away at its body until it has deteriorated and weakened to the point that the caller [to hayaa'] has little affect upon many Muslim women when they are called to it.

If we look at the profound state of affairs in which the Muslim woman lives and her digression behind western trends and continuous imitation of them until if they enter the lizard's hole she would enter along with them, we see a strong testimony of the weakness of deen and hayaa' in such a Muslim woman. This is

why I have strived, asking the Most High and Able Protector for assistance and sincerity, to write a few words aimed at my Muslim sisters that I hope will affect and reverberate upon their souls.

Why I Write

My beloved sister, the words I write are from a heart full of sorrow and pain at the sorry condition of so many Muslim women today. We see the Muslim woman who, dressed in clothing that is covering yet nakedness, comes out to display her charms and seduces the slaves of Allah with the filthiest of weapons - the weapon of enticement and allurement that she has learned of the ways and means of seduction. For you find this seduction in the home and in the street and in speech and in movement. Seduction in clothing and beautification, in walking and sitting and in the glance. It is really a serious matter that is disgraceful and that dismembers the heart with grief when we live in a reality where so many Muslim women are divested of hayaa'. The deen and the Qur'aan are forgotten and practices and morals are disavowed...and there is no ability or power except from Allah!

Dear sister, this address is from my humble and insufficient pen and lined by my injured inner being and it is naught but a cry from one warning and cautioning you, my dear sister. They are but words which I can only hope find your ears and by which the door of your heart may be reached and they find space, an entrance and acceptance and then application.

These words emanate from a heart that has love, friendship and sincere advice to you. Advice from a sister who has been caring much for her sister who she sees is heading down the road of misguidance upon which she is practically swept away. She has been deviated and is falling into the trap and snare that was prepared for her by the Zionist and she is negligent and doesn't know. How is it that I don't take hold of her hand and advise her and direct her or try to open her eyes to the plots and designs around her?

My deserving sister, my words are not new, yet they are a reminder for you so that perhaps Allah would cause you to benefit by them and make them flow over your heart with coolness and tranquility. Would that they have a great influence upon you, in shaa Allah. I appeal to you my beloved sister, to your sense of religion, your pure nature which Allah has created you upon, and your sense of modesty (hayaa'), and your fear of Allah the Most High and Able. Do you not listen at all to the call of your sincere sister who so cares for you?

Know my dear sister, that you and I and every Muslim woman, are standing on a port among the harbors of Islam. Namely, the Muslim family and the education of the children in the manner loved and accepted by Allah. Its pillar and foundation is obedience to Allah and following His Messenger (sallallahu 'alaihi wa sallam) and searching for what pleases Allah to acquire the priceless commodity that all of us hope for - Al-Jannah.

It is for this, my Muslim sister, that when the scheming enemies of Islam saw the position of the Muslim woman and the powerful influence she had amongst those with whom she lives as the teacher and developer of the coming generations and due to her would the upbringing be either solid or corrupted, they turned their focus on us. They focus on us, we Muslim women, to destroy our morals and take away our deen and hayaa' toward which we were naturally disposed and which we were commanded to stick to, until the morals of our sons, the men of the future and the pillars of the Ummah, get corrupted. They would destroy these morals which support the Ummah in its progress and understanding and (men) upon whom its honor depends after Allah. If this pillar is made defective or is destroyed and this strong nature of the Ummah is weakened, then what will become of its future? This is exactly what the enemies of Allah want.

Do You Not Understand?

Do you know how they [i.e. the enemies of Islam - trans.] are able to infiltrate and influence us through means that are enticing and outwardly innocent but internally filthy? It is through the method of giving honey-

covered poison presented through advertising and glittering and captivating addresses. It is their saying terms like, "Move with the times", "civilization", and "modernization". It is done through lowly magazines, seductive fashions, and saucy stories and tales. It is done through television series', films, songs and other means. Will you look to Allah my sister? Will you not return to your Rabb and throw the plots of your enemies back on their throats and reject their concepts and misleading titles? Will you say with the strength and honor of a Muslim 'I do not accept other than the order of Allah and the order of His Prophet!'?

My dear sister: What your enemy wants of you is indeed precious and costly. It is no simple matter for you. They want to ruin your deen, your moral character, your virtue and your hayaa in which you derive pride and honor. They want for you to be the despicable, reprehensible, and neglected of the society, as is the condition of their womenfolk. They call for the throwing off of the hijaab and to nudity and exposing yourself and they say to you:

Tear to pieces your covering O daughter of Islam Tear it up and burn it without hesitation
For truly it is a sham protector!

They weave conspiracy after conspiracy and devise plots and take up ambush positions all around us. They initiate dirty and poisonous activities such as the so-called "liberation movement", and "equality", and the impetus of that is for the destruction of your moral character and mine, as well as the moral character of all other Muslim women. These are all means and weapons they can use to ruin this true deen. This will occur if we answer their cunning calls and filthy invitations. Let us confront them and stand as one like a towering mountain before this destructive western whirlwind current in aid of this true deen and the preservation of Islam, morality and al-hayaa. Let us be a strong hand cuffing with its grip, hijaab, decency and morality the face of all who would violate any of its parts or who attempts to approach it and harm it.

You and I and every Muslim woman must say to the enemies of Allah what Aisha At-Taymuriyyah said:

With a hand of decency I defend the honor of my hijaab
And by my modesty I have risen above my contemporaries
And by brilliant and gifted thought And critical disposition have my good manners been perfected Nothing has harmed me of my culture and good learning
Except that I am best of those wise
Nothing has prevented us from rising
Except letting down the head cover from our locks and the covering of our faces

My beloved sister, what really cuts into my soul and deprives me of rest is to see a young Muslimah who believes in Allah as her Rabb, Islam as her deen and in Muhammad (sallallahu alaihi wa sallam) as a messenger and prophet, roaming the streets, roads, shopping centers, and other public places where one finds the good and the evil, the virtuous and the wicked, those of pure heart and those whose hearts are diseased who follow their sexual weakness and pursue young females. These young women go out beautified or wearing hijaab of the type that is itself such an adornment that by its appearance and style shoots like an arrow of attraction in the lustful heart of such a man. He will be tempted and his heart captured by her. Will Allah be pleased, I ask you by Allah, with the act of this young woman while He is the one who says to her and those like her among women: Do not make a display like the display of those previous to Islam (in ignorance). [Al-Ahzaab 33] Or will He be pleased with her deen, her modesty, her character as she was taught and raised on?!

Dear sister, don't you realize that among the signs of weak eemaan in a Muslim woman and the beginning of her defeat and the deprival of her honor and virtue is when she forsakes or abandons her deen and her morals? Al-Hayaa' is considered part of her nature. A Muslim lady has always been the parable of hayaa'. A famous proverb says:

The highest modesty is that of the virgin in her quarters.

The disappearance of al-hayaa' in a woman is a shortcoming in her eemaan and a departure from her nature. Have you comprehended that!?

By Allah that there is no good in life nor in the world when hayaa has vanished

What A Difference!

My Sister: Where is that young woman upon whom you see hayaa written all over to the point where it practically speaks to you because of her outer appearance, her bashfulness, and complete covering where she is on guard not to reveal even a finger fearing to reveal any part of her body or the tone of her skin or any of her physical charms? If you were to see her you would consider her like a black crow for her decorum and striving to maintain the hijaab.

The image of this modest young lady is such a stark contrast and contrary to the one who is made-up and leaves her home or school or workplace while at the height of adornment and peak beautification. She wears enticing clothing with nothing over it except a short abaayah (a lightweight over-garment usually black in color commonly worn by women in Gulf countries - Ed.) or a long one. However, it is no concern to her if it flys open in the wind on occasion or if she purposely lifts it up on another. She may even go out with a head covering that she uses to cover her face but it is sometimes so thin that colors of her face show through or so tight to the face that the contours of her nose or her cheeks are visible. She goes out adorned with gold jewelry and displays it up her forearms or on her hands which are also decorated with henna or with a manicure that she proudly shows to the people around her, not thinking that Allah is watching her from above the seven heavens!

What a difference between these two women! What a contrast between the one who adheres to the legislation of her Rabb and safeguards herself, her hijaab and her hayaa', and the one who neglects the matters of her religion and follow the ways of here enemies! What a difference between who sees that the hijaab is a part of deen and shariah and the means of her protection against filthiness, base qualities, and morass, and the one who views the hijaab as nothing but an antiquated custom. It is (to the latter) now no more than a sign of backwardness and regression. It is to her shackles that she must be released from so she can then be free to go on her way to ruin, disgrace and nudity.

My Precious Sister

How impoverished is the countenance and dying of shame is the believer when he looks at our women today - the mothers of tomorrow and the rearers of the generations to come - as they put their greatest concerns in trivial matters of no value or weight. Matters that are really contemptible nonsense that is incumbent for the Muslim to be far above because Islam is the religion of honor, high rank and sublimity.

Take A Look Around You

You, my beloved sister, can see your Muslim sister while she is keeping with shameless magazines, mean fashion, immoral television serials which a Muslim should be above watching, with lowly propagators all calling to the annihilation of the deen and morals. You can see your Muslim sister concerned with every hue and cry made to her by the callers of Shaytaan. Whereas, if the call to the truth is presented to her, she tries to silence it. You find the Muslim woman occupied with memorization of poetry, romance, and ridiculous narratives that are written by none other than the most foolish of people. Whereas when it comes to the Book of her Rabb, she may only have memorized a few odd ayaat and if you ask her what they mean or about a hadeeth she will not be able to answer you.

This is precisely what the enemies of Islam want They want to distance our youth from the manhaj (way) of Allah and distance them from the source of light, honor, and elevation. They want them to preoccupy themselves with other than the Book of our Rabb and the sunnah of our Prophet (sallallahu alaihi wa sallam)

because without them we are nothing! They want to make those of us who are cherished by this deen, follow them and be their adherents when it is they who Allah has humiliated and scorned.

We so regretfully find that the majority of our youth are not highly cognizant or knowledgable of deen. So what is the reason for this?! It is precisely because of their substitution of that learning for the education and ideas which have come to us from the west, and they coincide with their desires and lusts so that they do not look elsewhere.

My sister, the invasion of these ideas upon our intellects and conceptions have had an influence and are manifested in many Muslim women and has changed their understanding. So many women now find the salaah such a heavy burden that when they are called by the caller to the truth to hurry to the salaah you see one of them standing around as if lead-footed and moving so lazily you would think the weight of the worlds mountains was upon her head! However if there is a wedding or a party or a gathering for tea you will find her rushing to it and getting ready in the best and most beautiful outfits. She longs for the get-together in which may indeed be surrounded by the shayateen and permeated with back-biting, gossip, and mangling peoples honor.

My sister, you will find most of the young women of Islam wasting their time on things that are of no benefit. You may find one of them spending hours before the mirror dolling herself up but if you watch her salaah she flies through it like the pecking of a crow! Does she not know that her beauty, magnificence, and happiness is not in her skin, appearance or hairstyle? By Allah, it is rather in her taqwaa, her righteousness, her eemaan, and preservation of her morality, deen and hayaa.

Don't Be A Leaf In The Wind

My beloved sister, beware of being a characterless female blindly following every noise or new trend originating from the Zionists. You have your own dignity and independent personality that distinguishes you from others. If you must follow an example it should be that found in the biographies of the women companions who were superior and pure. You must look to the righteous and God-fearing callers to Allah for they are suitable for us to look to, rally around and follow in their footsteps. They are the torchlights on the path to guidance and upon their companionship is the best of this life and the Hereafter.

Don't follow, my dear sister, the vile callers to corruption who boast of vice...those who are bereft of the garment of virtue or hayaa'. By Allah what makes the heart weep and severs the grieved soul is to see a Muslim woman...if she sees her evil counterparts wearing tight, short, thin clothing she wears it and follows them. If she sees them wearing tight, tempting pants and revealing dresses sometimes even showing their private parts, thighs and buttocks, she parrots them! She neither upholds the ruling of the shari'ah in her clothing nor does she see what Allah has deemed acceptable for her of it. Instead she goes along with their so-called progressiveness and has no desire to divert from the procession of civilization and development and sees any digression as regression and backward repression despite that the source of regression, backwardness, self-defeatism and guilelessness is actually in her concepts, portrayal and action.

Amazed, Bewildered, Astonished and Astounded

My believing sister, I am increasingly amazed and astounded by the Muslim sister who wears tight and see-through clothing and who appears before strange men while she knows the threat of the Prophet (sallallahu alaihi wa sallam): There are two types of people in Hellfire among them are the women who are clothed yet naked, astray, tempting and whose hair is piled upon their heads like the humps of camels. They will neither enter Al-Jannah nor even smell its fragrance. [Muslim]

Likewise, I am in wonderment at the one who gathers up her dress until her legs are exposed while her beloved Muhammad (sallallahu alaihi wa sallam) ordered her to lower it by an armspan when he was asked by one of the noble women companions saying: Lower it by a handspan. So she said: But her feet would

then still be exposed! So he replied: Then by an armspan and don't exceed that. [At-Tirmidhi and others and ruled as hasan saheeh (good and authentic) in Sunan At-Tirmidhi no. 1415]

I am astounded at the one who knows that the voice of a woman is to be covered (awrah) unless there is a necessity but nevertheless she raises her voice with neither hayaa or deen. She talks with her girlfriends or whoever is with her as though they are in her house paying no heed to or concern with the presence of strange men around her while Allah the Mighty and Sublime states: And do not be too soft in speech lest he in whose heart is a disease (of hypocrisy, or evil desire for adultery, etc) should be moved with desire. [Al-Ahzaab 32]

Astonished again am I with the one who knows the ruling regarding wearing perfume outside of her home or school, especially when she puts it on and passes by strange men and they smell her scent through the air, Allah save us from it! Nevertheless she will put on the strongest scent that will surely try the one who smells it, and she goes out among strange men either in the marketplaces, malls or otherwise and brings upon herself the statement of Al-Mustafa (sallallahu alaihi was sallam): Verily the woman who is perfumed and passes by men and they smell her scent, she is called a zaaniyah (fornicator or adultress) in the heavens.[Ahmed and others with isnaad hasan Saheeh Al-Jaami 2701] But she cares not.

I am really bewildered when I see a bondswoman of Allah who knows the ruling regarding high heels (Many scholars view them as impermissible to wear due to the deception, physical harm, and tendency to cause a seductive gait and drawing undue attention. Trans.) and that wearing them is a form of trickery and seduction of the one who sees her and thinks she is tall while she is not. She knows that they are also unhealthy and harmful socially and morally. She closes her ears to the caller to the correct way and persists on wearing flashy, gaudy, eye-catching shoes that are sure to turn heads and bring on fitnah to make matters worse as they say.

I am amazed at my sisters, those who hear the call to what is right and nevertheless distance themselves from following it out of pursuing their desires and the diseases of the baser self (an-nafs al-amaarah bis soo). Can you guarantee, my beloved sister, your lifetime even for a moment what would happen if perhaps Allah would not permit you another day and you are upon the sinfulness you are commiting? Can you imagine how you would meet your Rabb?!

Think about that, my Muslim sister, and know that the pleasures of this worldy life are but fleeting and no person will leave behind anything but their deeds. If they were righteous, then there is only the best reward...if they were otherwise, then woe to them for what they may meet.

Take Action And Do The Right Thing

My dear sister, safeguard your complete Islamic hijaab and throw away the hijaab of beautification and proceed to the obedience of your Rabb. Put aside the nonsense and the vices because you are above all that. Tear apart, no burn every shameless and vile page, novel or sentence that calls for release from values, deen and hayaa' to depravity, corruption, shame and scandal.

Close your ears to the bleating of the west, their noisemaking and other clamoring and instead open your ears and heart to the call of goodness and faith. Be acceptant of the Book of your Rabb, the fountainhead of all good for you in this life and in the Hereafter and adhere to the sunnah of your Prophet (sallallahu alaihi wa sallam) the example for your life and your torchlight. Throw back the plots of your enemies upon their necks by holding firm to the Book of your Rabb and the sunnah of your Prophet (sallallahu alaihi wa sallam) and cause them to suffocate in exasperation and vexation at your upsetting them. Do it, my beloved sister, for it is the act of the Muslim woman who is proud of her deen.

Appendix

The Requirements Of Women's Hijaab In Accordance With The Qur'aan, The Authentic Sunnah, And The Practice Of The Pious Predecessors

Introduction:

This essay will attempt to briefly yet concisely enumerate the basic requirements regarding Muslim women's dress (Hijaab) as stipulated by the Sharee'ah of Islaam. The term Hijaab, itself includes not only dress and covering the body, but methods of behavior before members of the same and/or opposite sex, promoting privacy for females and prohibiting loose intermingling between males and females, and thereby encouraging modesty, decency, and chastity.

Minor differences exist among the scholars regarding the actual number of the requirements because of varying methods used by them in codifying such. The ones mentioned here represent the ones agreed upon by the overwhelming majority of scholars and are all solidly backed by firm evidence taken from the Quraan, the Sunnah and the practice of the Sahaabah (radiallahu ‘anhum).

The First Requirement: The Extent of Covering

The dress worn in public must cover the entire body except what has been specifically excluded, based upon the following proofs:

Allah Ta'ala says: ***And tell the believing women to lower their gaze and guard their private pans from sin and not show off their adornment (Zeenah) except only that which is apparent, and draw their headcovers (Khumur) over their necks and bosoms and not reveal their adornment except to their husbands, their fathers, their husbands' fathers, their sons, their husbands' sons, their brothers, or their brothers' sons, or their sisters' sons, or their women (i.e., their sisters in Islaam), or their female slaves whom their right hands possess, or old male servants free of physical desires, or small children who have no sense of women's nakedness. And let them not stamp their feet so as to reveal what they hide of their adornment. And turn unto Allah all together, 0 you Believers, in order that you may attain success.*** [An-Noor: 31]

The word zeenah in the Aayah above, literally means 'adornment', and includes both (a) that which Allah has adorned, i.e., the woman's natural and/or physical beauty, and (b) that with which they adorn themselves, i.e., jewelry, eye shadow, attractive clothing, hand dye, etc. Soorah An-Noor spells out specifically the commands concerning the fact that a woman's natural beauty and her adornments are to be concealed from strangers except by: (1) What may show due to accidental or uncontrollable factors such as the blowing of the wind, etc., and (2) What has been exempted (see explanation at end of this section).

Allah also says: ***O Prophet, tell your wives and your daughters the women of the believers to draw their out garments (jalaabeeb) about themselves (when they go out). That is better so that they may be recognized and not molested. And Allah is Forgiving, Merciful.*** [Al-Ahzaab:59)

Abu Dawood narrates that 'Aaishah (radiallahu 'anhaa) said Asmaa' the daughter of Abu Bakr (radiallahu 'anhumaa) came to see the Messenger of Allah (sallallahu 'alaihi wa sallam) wearing a thin dress; Rasool-Allah (sallallahu 'alaihi wa sallam) turned away from her and said: **0 Asmaa', once a woman reaches the**

age menstruation, no part of her body should be seen but this - and he pointed to his face and hands.

The word Khumur (p1. of Khimaar) refers to a cloth which covers the head (including the ears), hair, neck and bosom. The esteemed Mufassir (Quraanic interpreter) Al-Qurtubee explained: Women in the past used to cover their heads with Khimaar, throwing its ends over their backs. Thus leaving the neck and the upper part of the chest bare, in manner of the Christians. Then Allah commanded them to cover those parts with the Khimaar.

Allah states further in this Aayah: ***And let them not stamp their feet so as to reveal what they hide of their adornment...***

The women in the time of the Prophet (sallallahu 'alaihi wa sallam) wore anklets which could employed to attract attention by stamping their feet thereby making the anklets tinkle. This practice is not only forbidden by Allah, but moreover, shows that the legs and ankles are to be covered as well.

Some of modern day Hanafee scholars are of the mistaken view that a woman can display her feet, a portion of her forearms and her ears; yet there is no authentic proof from the practice of the Prophet (sallallahu 'alaihi wa sallam) or Sahaabah to uphold such a view.

Amongst the authentic Ahadeeth which clarify this point is the following: lbn 'Umar (radiallahu 'anhu) reported that Rasoolullah (sallallahu 'alaihi wa sallam) said: On the Day of Resurrection Allah will not look at the man who trails his garment along out of pride. Umm Salamah then asked: What should women do with (the hems of) her garment? He replied: **Let them lower them a handspan.** She said: Their feet would be exposed! He then said: **Let them lower them a forearm's length but no more.** [Reported by At~Tabaraanee-Saheeh).

The Aayah of Soorah An-Noor also lists in detail those with whom a woman is permitted to be more at ease. Furthermore, the ayah from Soorah Al-Ahzaab orders Muslim women to draw their outer garments about themselves when they go out.

Abu Dawood related that 'Aaishah (radiallahu 'anhaa) said: After this Aayah was revealed the women of the Ansaar appeared like crows (because of the color and shape of the cloaks they wore). Hence, an outer garment or cloak must be worn by a Muslim woman whenever she goes out in public or if she is presence of strangers within her own home or the home of a close relative. Slight differences have arisen among the scholars concerning the precise meaning of ...except that which is apparent... from Soorah An-Noor which according to Ibn 'Abbaas (radiallahu 'anhu), includes 'the face and the two hands, and rings.' This view is shared by Ibn 'Umar, 'Ata'a, and others from the Tabi'een. [Tafseer Ibn Katheer] Also, Imaam Ash-Showkani states concerning this same ayaah, that it includes: "The dress, the face, and the two hands"; Ibn 'Abbaas and Qataadah have stated "The adornments include eye shadow (Kuhul), bracelets, hand dye, and rings, and it is not permissable for women to (uncover) them." [Fath Al-Qadeer]

The major point of difference among the scholars concerns the hadeeth of Asmaa (radiallahu 'anhaa) i.e., that the face and hands need not be covered; a number of the scholars have maintained that the face and hands must also be covered, because it was the practice of the wives of the Prophet (sallallahu 'alaihi wa sallam) and the wives of the Sahaabah to cover themselves completely according to authentic Ahadeeth. The above point has been a topic of debate amongst the scholars both past and present and will be dealt with, Insha' Allah at the end of this essay.

The Second Requirement: Thickness

The garment should be thick and opaque so as not to display the skin color and form of the body beneath it. Delicate or transparent clothing does not constitute a proper covering. Al-Qurtubee reports a narration from 'Aaishah (radiallahu 'anhaa) that some women from Banu Tameem came to see her wearing transparent

clothing. 'Aaishah said to them: If you are believing women, these are not the clothes of believing women. He also reports that a bride came to see her, wearing a sheer, transparent Khimaar whereupon 'Aaishah (radiallahu 'anhaa) said: A woman who wears such clothing does not believe in Soorat An-Noor. Moreover, the following hadeeth makes this point graphically clear. Rasool-Allah (sallallahu 'alaihi wa sallam) said: **There will be in the last of my Ummah, scantily dressed women, the hair on the top of their heads like a camel's hump. Curse them, for verily they are cursed.**

In another version he (sallallahu 'alaihi wa sallam) said: **...scantily dressed women, who go astray and make others go astray; they will not enter Paradise nor smell its fragrance, although it can be smelled from afar.** [At-Tabaranee and Saheeh Muslim]

"Scantily dressed women" are those who wear clothing which reveals more than it conceals, thereby increasing her attractiveness while opening the path to a host of evils.

The Third Requirement: Looseness

The clothing must hang loosely enough and not be so tight-fitting as to show the shape and size of the woman's body. This obviously includes such things as skin-tight body suits, etc. The following hadeeth proves this point clearly. Usaama ibn Zayd (radiallahu 'anhumaa) said: Rasool-Allah (sallallahu 'alaihi wa sallam) gave me a gift of thick Coptic cloth he had received as a gift from Dahiah Al-Kalbee, and so I gave it to my wife.

Thereafter the Prophet (sallallahu 'alaihi wa sallam) asked me: Why didn't you wear the Coptic cloth? I replied: I gave it to my wife. The Prophet (sallallahu 'alaihi wa sallam) then said: **Tell her to wear a thick gown under it (the Coptic garment) for I fear that it may describe the size of her limbs.** [Narrated by Ahmad, AI-Bayhaqee, and Al-Haakim]

The Fourth Requirement: Color, Appearance and Demeanor

Allah Ta'ala says: ***0 wives of the Prophet! You are not like any other women; if you fear (Allah), then do not he too pleasant of speech, lest one in whose heart is a disease should feel desire for you.*** [Al-Ahzaab: 32]

The reason for the revelation of this verse is not the fear of distrust nor misbehavior on the part of the women, but rather to prevent them from speaking invitingly, walking seductively, or dressing revealingly so as to arouse sexual desire in the heart of lecherous and evil men. Seductive dressing and enticing speech are the characteristics of ill-intentioned women, not Muslims. Al-Qurtubee mentions that Mujahid (radiallahu 'anhu) said: Women (before the advent of Islaam) used to walk about among men. Qataada (radiallahu 'anhu) said: They used to walk in a sensuous and seductive manner. Maqaatil (radiallahu 'anhu) said: The women used to wear an untied cloth on their heads, while provocatively toying with their necklaces, earrings and other ornamental jewelry.

Furthermore, Allah has commanded women not to display their beauty, meaning both natural and acquired beauty.

Allah commands the believing women thus: ...And do not make a display of yourselves (tabarruj) like the displaying of the ignorance of long ago... [Al-Ahzaab: 33]

A garment which is intended to conceal a woman and her beauty from public view cannot be a thing which enhances her beauty. Therefore, the garment cannot contain bright colors, bold designs or shiny and reflective material that draw men's attention to the wearer. The word above, At-Tabarruj, means not only "to display oneself" but also "to spruce up one's charms for the purpose of exciting desire"!

Imaam Adh-Dhahabee says in his book Kitaab AI-Kabaa'ir (The Book of Major Sins): Amongst the deeds which a woman is cursed for are displaying the adornments she wears, wearing perfume when she goes out, and wearing colorful clothes... Hence, the Muslim woman is encouraged to wear muted, somber colors and to avoid bright designs, patterns and colors.

This point should serve also as a reminder to Muslim men who are in positions of responsibility for their women, that Rasool-Allah (sallallahu 'alaihi wa sallam) has warned in an authentic hadeeth narrated by 'Abdullah ibn 'Amr ibn Al-'Aas that amongst the three individuals who would not enter Jannah (Paradise) would be: Ad-Dayooth, who is contented with obscenity within his family. i.e., a cuckold - a man who permits the women he is responsible for, such as his wife, daughter, etc. to engage in illicit sexual relations or to display their beauty to men, thereby stimulating sexual desire!

The Fifth Requirement: Difference from Men's Clothing

The clothing of a Muslim woman must not resemble the clothing of men. The following two hadeeth help to explain this.

Abu Hurayrah (radiallahu 'anhu) said: **Rasool-Allah (sallallahu 'alaihi wa sallam) cursed the man who wears women's clothes and the woman who wears men's clothes.** [Abu Dawood and Ibn Maajah Saheeh]

'Abdullah ibn 'Umar (radiallahu 'anhumaa) said he heard Rasool-Allah (sallallahu 'alaihi wa sallam) say: **The man who resembles a woman and the woman who resembles a man is not of us (i.e., not of the believers).** [Ahmad and At-Tabaraanee - Saheeh)

Additionally, Abu Dawood relates a narration from Umm Salamah (radiallahu 'anhaa) which shows that the Prophet (sallallahu 'alaihi wa sallam) forbade women to bundle their Khumoor on their heads in such a way

as to resemble the turban of a man. Western Muslim sisters should pay specific attention to this point since regretfully this has become a widespread practice amongst many of them!

The Sixth Requirement: Difference from the Clothing of Unbelievers

Her clothing must not resemble the clothing of unbelievers. This is a general ruling of the Sharee'ah which encompasses not only dress but also such things as manners, customs, religious practices and festivities, transactions, etc. Indeed, dissimilarity with unbelievers is a precedent that was established by the first generation of Islam. The following two hadeeth and statement of 'Umar (radiallahu 'anhu) will help to clarify this position.

'Abdullah ibn 'Amr ibn Al-'Aas said: Rasool-Allah (sallallahu 'alaihi wa sallam) saw me wearing two saffron colored garments, so he said: **Indeed, these are the clothes of kuffaar (unbelievers), so do not wear them.** [Saheeh Muslim]

'Abdullah ibn 'Umar (radiallahu 'anhumaa) said: Rasool-Allah (sallallahu 'alaihi wa sallam) stated: **Whoever resembles a people is one of them.** [Abu Daawood]

Abu Musa Al-Ash'aree (radiallahu 'anhu) related that 'Umar (radiallahu 'anhu) told him: ...I shall not honor those whom Allah has dishonored, nor esteem those He has humbled, nor bring close those whom He has kept afar. [Ahmad]

The Seventh Requirement: No Vain or Ostentatious Dressing

The woman's dress must not be an expression of ostentation, vanity or as a status symbol by being excessively showy or expensive, nor must it be excessively tattered so as to gain admiration and fame for being humble. Ibn 'Umar (radiallahu 'anhumaa) reported that Rasool-Allah (sallallahu 'alaihi wa sallam) said**: Whoever dresses for ostentation in this world, Allah will dress that person in a dress of humiliation on the Day of Resurrection, and then set it on fire.** [Abu Dawood]

The Niqaab (Face Veil): Between Mustahab (Recommendable) and Waajib (Mandatory)

The esteemed Quraanic commentators At-Tabaree and Al-Qurtubee have elaborated on the form of Hijaab or Jilbaab i.e., "outer garments" as viewed by the Companions of the Prophet (radiallahu 'anhum), as well as the circumstances surrounding the revelation of Soorah Al-Ahzaab: 59, that was quoted at the beginning of this essay. They state that when the believing women used to go out at night (wearing ordinary clothes) to answer the call of nature, some hypocrites tried to annoy them, thinking the women were slave girls. The women thereby would scream out loudly causing these hypocrites to flee. Thereupon Allah revealed this Ayaah.

Al-Qurtubee states that the jilbaab is "a cloth which covers the entire body." Ibn 'Abbaas and 'Ubaidah As-Salmaanee have said that it is to be fully wrapped anound the women's body, so that nothing appears but "one eye with which she can see." The Tabi'ee, Qataadah (radiallahu 'anhum), stated that the Jilbaab should be wrapped and fixed from above the forehead and made to cover the nose, (although the eyes are to show) and the chest and most of the face are to be covered.

Furthermore, it has been authentically related in the Muwatta of Imaam Maalik and the Sunan of Abu Dawood that the Prophet (sallallahu 'alaihi wa sallam) forbade women from covering their faces and hands during their performance of Salaat, Hajj or Umrah. This clearly indicates that wearing the face veil (Niqaab or

Burqa'a) was a common practice during the time of Rasool-Allah (sallallahu 'alaihi wa sallam), and not as some people claim, a cultural practice that appeared years later!

Among the proofs used by the scholars regarding the face veil are the following: 'Aaishah (radiallahu 'anhaa) said: May Allah bestow His Mercy on the first Muhaajiraat (emigrants). When Allah revealed: ...and draw their headcovers over their necks and bosoms... they tore their (material) and covered themselves with it. [Al-Bukharee]

Ibn Hajar Al-Asqalanee, known as "Ameer Al-Mu'mineen in Hadeeth" has explained that "covered themselves" means: "covered their faces." [Fath Al-Baree] Additionally, after the battle of Khaybar, the Prophet (sallallahu 'alaihi wa sallam) married Safiyah bint Huyai. The Muslims said amongst themselves: Will she (Safiyah) be one of the Mothers of the Believers (i.e., wives of the Prophet) or just what his right hand possesses (i.e., slave girl). Some of them said: If he (sallallahu 'alaihi wa sallam) makes her observe Hijaab, then she will be one of the Mothers of the Believers, and if he does not make her observe Hijaab, then she will be what his right hand possesses. So when he departed (for Medina), he made a place for her behind him (on his camel) and made her observe Hijaab. [Al-Bukharee]

Looking At The Opinions

The issue of the Niqaab has continued to arouse extended controversy and debate between 'Ulamaa (scholars) and Fuqahaa (jurists) both past and present concerning whether it is Waajib (mandatory) or Mustahabb (favored by Allah ta'aalaa) for the woman. And whether she subsequently falls into sin by exposing her face or not. Each of the two sides clings to their own opinion that they in turn support with evidences from the Quraanic Ayaat, the Prophetic ahadeeth and the practice of the Sahaabah and their views.

One of the views on this is that the Niqaab is legally binding on the woman and she who abandons it is a sinner. It says that the woman's face - which she is ordered not to reveal to non-relatives - is definitely part of the Auwrah (private areas that are never to be exposed). The other view says that the Niqaab is simply recommended and encourages the woman to cover her face; however, it does not place it on the level of being mandatory. Consequently, this opinion does not consider the woman falling into sin when she exposes and unveils her face as long as in doing so, she has not applied facial makeup.

The dispute continues between the two viewpoints and takes on, in certain occasions, bitter aspects. The advocates for making the face veil mandatory accuses the other group of following their own desires. The other group accuses their opponents with being obstinate fanatics. The matter is much broader than this and does not require accusations of obstinacy nor of following the desires but rather requires making Ijtihaad (judgement based on the Sharee'ah) and following Daleel (proof from the Sharee'ah) to the best of one's ability. To give the benefit of the doubt in such a situation is better and most befitting for the Muslim, limiting the points of difference and narrowing the gap of disagreement are two factors which are sought after. I do not want in this rush to take a side with one group over the other: nor to validate the proofs of which I see the truth in this issue. Rather the aim is, as I said, to narrow the controversy and to highlight the points agreed upon. Thereby, we may adopt them and work on spreading them. As for the point of disagreement - it will remain under the category of Ijtihaad whose scholarly advocate will be rewarded whether he attains truth or was mistaken.

Please Consider The Following

First: The two views agree upon the legitimacy of the Niqaab, that it is a consummate perfection for a woman and more virtuous for her, as well as closer to the aims of the Sharee'ah - which is to prevent Fitnah - and is an obstruction to excuses as well as severing the path of those who follow their lusts. It is therefore more appropriate that the efforts should be directed to encourage wearing the Niqaab, and to motivate

people towards it, and to show and explain its virtues and merits. This implies that covering the face with the Niqaab should be the general rule and uncovering the face the exception.

Second: In spite of the fact that there are differing views on the Islaamic ruling regarding whether the Niqaab is obligatory or recommended, it is undoubtably one's duty to unify the call for it and cooperate as much as possible in urging young women about its necessity and to limit their desire to expose their faces as much as possible. Indeed, it is merely gracious to both parties, unlike what is happening now between opposing sides - which is to leave the matter loose and dangling through the claim that the Niqaab is only Mustahabb, and being aloof from spreading the call for it. This is indeed an inversion of the truth and poor judgement in the matter.

Hence, my brother Muslims, when you are asked: 'What is the form of the Hijaab according to the Sharee'ah, especially from a woman who loves the Deen?' you should urge and encourage her to wear the Niqaab even if you are of the opinion that it is only Mustahabb.

Lastly: We truly hope from Allah subhaanahu wa ta'aalaa for the day when all believing women rush to cover their faces with full contentment of their souls and desire for their Deen is the strongest of desires. This is a hope which, without any doubt, is shared with me by those who are of the opinion of it being Mustahabb and those who are of the opinion of it being Waajib.

I pray that Allah guide us along the Straight Path, and protect us from deviation after having followed guidance. And may Allah bless the Leader of His Messengers, Muhammad (sallallahu 'alaihi wa sallam), his family and his companions, and all who follow in their footsteps until the Final Hour, Ameen.

Compiled by I.A. Palmer